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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

20 November 1956

STAFF MEMORANDUM No. 91-56

SUBJECT: Far East Reactions to Events in Hungary and Egypt.

1. Official governmental reactions in the Far East to the recent events in Hungary and Egypt have not been uniform, but rather have followed a "spectrum" pattern. At the "red" end of the spectrum are the Communist controlled countries which have faithfully followed the Moscow Communist line. Communist China has embellished the Moscow view by charging that the US is conniving at Anglo-French-Israeli action in Egypt in order to establish its own control there, and by claiming 250,000 Chinese have declared a desire to "volunteer" on the side of the Egyptians. At the other end of the spectrum is South Korea which generally has ignored the Egyptian developments and in effect says that now is the time for all peoples subject to the domination of the USSR to revolt. Official reaction in Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, the Philippines, and Japan has been fairly well balanced in condemning the Israeli-French-English action and the action of the USSR in Hungary. South Vietnam, South Korea, Laos, and Nationalist China have reacted more strongly over the Hungarian situation than the developments in Egypt. Indonesia, on the other hand, has given little attention to Hungary and has concentrated its condemnation against the action of the Western colonial powers.

2. Public reactions in Burma, Indonesia, and Thailand showed much more concern over the Egyptian situation than over events in Hungary. In these countries, street demonstrations, to some extent abetted by local Communists, were directed against the French, British, and Israelis. Moreover, in Indonesia labor unions have refused to service British and French ships and planes and have refused to load oil for Singapore or Malaya. There have been no public demonstrations against the USSR in these three countries. On the other hand, popular demonstrations (apparently government sponsored) against the USSR took place in South Vietnam and South Korea and on a smaller scale in the Philippines. No popular demonstrations took place against England,

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France, or Israel in these countries. Although popular opinion in Japan, Hongkong, and Singapore seems to be greatly concerned over both situations, there have been no popular demonstrations against either the USSR or the UK, France, or Israel. In Malaya there is apparently considerable popular concern over the Egyptian crisis but little with respect to Hungary.

3. In most Asian countries, the newspapers have given wide coverage of both the Egyptian and Hungarian developments, plus editorial comment which generally has condemned both the English-French-Israel action and the action of the USSR in Hungary. However, the Egyptian situation has received a preponderance of the coverage and adverse editorial comment. The extreme left wing and Communist papers in all countries faithfully follow the Moscow line.

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APPENDIX A

OFFICIAL REACTIONS OF NON-COMMUNIST ASIAN GOVERNMENTS

Indonesia

1. Indonesia refused (along with Burma and 11 Near East and South Asian countries) to vote for the UNGA resolution condemning the USSR for its actions in Hungary. Indonesian officials have explained their abstention as due to "psychological factors" such as French-British support of the resolution and the difference in degree of censure between Egyptian and Hungarian resolutions. They said that the Hungarian resolution tended to distract from the Egyptian problem which Indonesian officials said was the more serious. Subsequently, the Indonesian government modified its position and publicly stated that it regrets the involvement of Soviet troops whether requested or not, in the Hungarian situation. It further stated that the Soviet action denied the Hungarian peoples the freedom to determine the nature and structure of their government, and was not in accord with the spirit and principles of the Bandung conference.
2. The Indonesian government has strongly condemned Israel, France, and England for aggression against Egypt, and the Foreign Minister explained before Parliament that Indonesia considered the attack of direct concern to the people of Indonesia because it demonstrated that small countries could still be attacked by imperialist powers. Subsequently the Indonesian government announced that it would participate in the UN-sponsored police force.
3. The Indonesian government also called a meeting of the Columbo Powers. Although Pakistan refused to attend, the Prime Ministers of Indonesia, India, Burma, and Ceylon met in New Delhi and issued a strong statement condemning England, France, and Israel for their actions in Egypt. Although this statement also severely criticized the Soviet Union for its actions in Hungary, the general thrust of the statement made it clear that the four Prime Ministers considered the action in Egypt to be of much greater seriousness and one which directly involved them.

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Burma

4. Although Burma also abstained on the UNGA Hungarian resolution, the Burmese government officials subsequently explained this was the result of a lack of instructions to its UN delegation and have indicated that it would "not happen again." Since that time the Burmese Cabinet leaders have publicly expressed vigorous opposition to Soviet armed intervention in Hungary, have called for the Soviet troops to withdraw, have referred to the Soviet action as a "most despicable form of colonialism" and as having "completed our disillusionment about Soviet Russia." These statements by the Burmese leaders have been the most forthright criticisms of the USSR heard from Burma in recent years, in part a result of their apparent shock at the Soviet action.

5. In addition to joining in the Prime Ministers' declaration at New Delhi, Burma has called for the withdrawal of foreign troops from Egypt and has supported the UN action to this end. However, Burma is in an awkward position because of its exceptionally close relations with Israel.

Thailand

6. The Thai government has formally condemned the USSR and Israel, France, and England by its UNGA resolution votes, and has shown considerable concern over both the ~~Egyptian~~ and Hungarian situations. There is some fear that general war might develop out of either situation or that the Communists might take advantage of the confused state of world affairs to move against Thailand. The Thai government officials have privately expressed considerable concern over the adverse effect on SEATO which has resulted from the fact that four members are "on the wrong side of the moral issue."

Malaya

7. In Malaya, Rahman has stated that the crisis would not affect Malayan independence and has asked all Muslims to keep calm, saying the ~~Egyptian~~ squabble will soon pass away and that in any case it is useless to take sides since Malaya is still under British rule. There appears to have been no official comment by Malayan leaders on the Hungary developments.

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Cambodia

8. Prince Sihanouk has refused to take any position in the Hungarian and Egyptian issues although his government did vote in favor of the UNGA resolutions condemning the USSR over Hungary and Israel, France, and England over Egypt. He has been able to take this apparent inconsistent position because he does not, at present, hold a formal position in the government. Sihanouk has, however, proposed a special UN investigation commission and has hinted that he should be the Asian representative on such a commission. He has made it clear that he considers himself to be "more neutral" than Nehru.

Japan

9. At the outset of the hostilities in Egypt, the Japanese government expressed hope that the trouble could be settled quickly through UN processes. The Foreign Minister subsequently made a statement to the Diet charging that the UK and France had trampled underfoot the spirit of the UN by using the veto in the Security Council and by employing direct military force against Egypt. Concerning Hungary, the Foreign Minister said that the Hungarians wanted more than Titoism, and opposed not only Soviet rule but communism itself. He said that the USSR, seizing the moment when the Suez dispute reached a critical stage, mobilized vast armies and started to crush the Hungarian national movement. He added that the Japanese feel deep sympathy for the Hungarian people crying out for basic human rights and political freedom and appealed to the Soviet leaders to listen to the voice of Hungary and to take measures to ease the situation in line with the UN resolutions.

Laos

10. Official reaction in Laos to the Hungarian situation was one of shock at the Russian action and the Cabinet temporarily reversed its decision to recognize the USSR. The Lao delegate at the UN was instructed to join in condemnation of Soviet intervention but abstained in the UN vote condemning British, French, and Israeli action.

South Vietnam

11. Official reaction in South Vietnam to the Egyptian situation was mild, whereas it was extremely strong against the Soviet intervention in Hungary. The government issued a statement on 6 November.

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condemning the Soviet intervention, expressing concern over the Anglo-Israeli-French action, and inspired and supported public demonstrations throughout the country against the USSR and in sympathy with the Hungarian people.

Philippines

12. The Philippine government has followed the US lead in its attitude toward both the Hungarian and Egyptian situations and has voted accordingly in the UN. However, it has not otherwise publicly announced a strong affirmative position.

Nationalist China

13. The National Government of China has followed the US lead concerning its position in Hungary and Egypt, but has expressed some disappointment that no effective measures have been taken to help Hungarian revolutionaries. The Foreign Minister and a Legislative Yuan resolution condemned Russian aggression and called for more vigorous UN and free world support for the Hungarian people.

South Korea

14. President Syngman Rhee has urged that the "civilized world" extend material and moral support to those fighting Soviet Communism and declared that the ROK was ready to give generously of what it has to help freedom-loving nations throw off their shackles. He stated, however, that the ROK is not at present in a position to urge the North Koreans to rebel against Communism because he was afraid that they would suffer heavy casualties, but he said that the ROK should prepare for a march north to free the North Korean people whenever the opportunity arrives, and added that the paramount responsibility of the ROK is to rescue the North Koreans from Communist slavery and secure unification, freedom, and peace. Public demonstrations, apparently instigated by the South Korean officials, encouraged the North Koreans to rise against the Communist regime.

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